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ABSTRACT

Suggestions for research on the components of self-theory development over a lifetime are examined. Self-theory, like other knowledge, is dependent on the theories in one's culture about human nature and the biological, social, and physical world. Language expands or limits the concepts available for thinking about one's self-image or sense of self. Yet there is little in behavioral sciences literature which traces these changes. Three possible models are provided for further research. The theory of personal control interprets self-image as the growth and decline in the feeling of power, control, and mastery of the key tasks of life. The progression from early age on into the career can be characterized by an increase in realism about what is possible, and by a steady lowering of aspirations to correspond to the gradual foreclosing of reality. The theory of change in oneself stresses that every person must have as a component of the self-theory some hypothesis about the kind of person he can become in future time and, hence, the possibility of personal change. (Author/DE)

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LIFE SPAN DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEORY OF ONESELF*

Orville G. Brim, Jr.
Foundation for Child Development

*Invited address to the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development Biennial Conference, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, July 1975.

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I. The Sense of Self Viewed as Theory About Oneself

I have reviewed much of the theory and research devoted to that aspect of personality called the self-image or the sense of self, and I now have developed a certain perspective on the nature of the self which I present in briefest outline here to set the stage for consideration of lifespan developmental changes.

I must say that in my judgment there has not been an important new idea in this domain since the turn of the century --- when we had some of the first new ideas, in their own time, about the self since Descartes. In Europe, Freud was producing his classics in 1900, 1901, and 1905, and in the United States there was that famous quintet, of James, Baldwin, Dewey, Cooley, and Mead. We have since seen the production of thousands of studies and essays on the self in the past seventy-five years, and these exist much like a lot of loose bricks lying around the brick yard, waiting to be used by the architect and builder.

The question that would seem to stop scholars is whether, after three thousand years of inquiry, it is still worthwhile to keep looking for new personality concepts or even new perspectives with reference to the human self image. Still, more or less out of nowhere around 1900 came the concepts of the looking-glass self, the rules of the game, the role specificity of the self concept, the generalized other, and, of course, repression and the mechanisms of defense --- all examples that can spur the modern scholar on in the search for great new unrecognized principles.

The only reality --- to begin my exposition --- that one can ever know is the self in contact with reality. We can see how human theories of reality consist of:

- relating events in nature to each other
- relating other persons to nature
- relating other people to each other
- relating self to nature
- relating self to other people
- relating one's self parts to each other, e.g. the body and mind

Certainly this is not mysterious. What men learn during life are axioms, concepts and hypotheses about themselves in relation to the world around them. We can think of the sense of self as a personal epistemology, similar to theories in science in its components and its operations, but dealing only with a specific person. The important thing to remember is that it is a self theory, and that the phrase "self concept" has stood in the way of further progress along this particular path. What we should say, more strictly,

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is that the self is a body of theory, and that it is a segment of a human's whole theory of himself and the world around him. Our scholarly efforts might be described as developing a "theory of the self theory."

Some years ago when I was working with self estimates of intelligence in executives, and in college and high-school students --- asking them how they thought they compared in intelligence with certain significant others --- I was exploring a certain component of self theory referring to one's capacities.(1) And, a year or so ago, in analyzing the meaning of an individual's sense of personal control over life it became clear that I was dealing with an idiosyncratic personal theory of causality involving the person as the actor and the world outside as the object.(2) As I said then, the sense of personal control is in fact a system of belief --- I would now call it a theory about oneself in relation to environment --- a concern with causality, with whether outcomes are a consequence of one's own behavior, or tend to occur independently of one's own behavior. Consider these items used frequently in well-known inventories of the personality dimension of internal versus external control:

> "Everytime I try to get ahead something or somebody stops me."
>
> "My existence is completely under the control of destiny."
>
> "What happens to me is my own doing."
>
> "When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work."

Responses to these items are not considered indicators of motives, or attitudes, or goals, or values, but of beliefs. The desire for mastery and control is different from the belief one is in control in the same way that the desire for love and recognition differs from the feeling of being loved.

As I began to work through some theoretical problems from this new perspective, I also checked more widely on the published work available to me to see who else might have been developing along the same line. I found very little; Alfred Altschuler and his colleagues from the University of Massachusetts have some working papers on self-knowledge development --- but the most complete statement I found is a paper by Seymour Epstein (3), dealing with self-concept as a theory about oneself.

I want to comment on a few aspects of this special perspective on the self. First, the most complete use of the general concept of the "sense of self" must include the experience of primary affect, not mediated by symbols or concepts --- something like a lizard lying on a flat rock in the sun. But that portion of the sense of

self which is theory requires some symbolism; requires statements in the form of propositions. It will be difficult to set precise boundaries for these primary affect and symbolized theory components of the sense of self, for as we know, it is almost impossible to eliminate the ubiquitous influence of society in labeling all of our experiences from birth on, e.g., the child utterly engrossed in eating his first ice cream cone, and the mother saying, "Bite it, don't lick it."

Second, not only is there nothing incompatible with this formulation and the fundamental principles of human learning, but the acquisition of concepts and propositions relating oneself to the world is the major substance of lifetime learning. However, calling it a self theory differs from being only "just what is learned," in that viewing this body of learning as a body of theory means we can analyze it in terms of what we know about the nature of scientific theories; can examine it for axioms, concepts, principles, and hypotheses, and can develop and use a systematic language to describe this vast portion of the person's learning.

Third, I mention methods of research only to allow me to remark that the ethnomethodologists, in sociology, have developed systematic procedures of observation and interview designed to keep themselves out of the data and keep the person in. Proceeding from the view of human behavior that each individual has his own idiosyncratic meaning and purpose for his behavior, (in our terms, his own theory of what he is about) which is lost because of a priori concepts on the part of the data gatherer, the objective is to find and describe this uniqueness in each actor.

Fourth, I note simply that primary affect and learned motives are the energizers, are the mainsprings of the action of the organism; and I am working with a very simple set, at a fairly general level.

Fifth, the "content" of a person's self theory can be analyzed in many ways. One might classify self-theory content by institutional area, relating to marriage, to work, to religion, and the like. As one might classify beliefs and propositions with reference to fundamental motives, such as those centered around the concern about being liked and approved, or around the exploration and control over one's life and environment. Still another, an ancient classificatory system, to be sure, would categorize components of the theory about one's self according to whether they deal with the body or the mind or the personality; e.g., one's body can do X or one's intellectual capacities enable him to solve problem Y; while one's personal style permits him to manage social situation Z.

Another approach to content, and more subtle theoretically, are based on the relationships between a person and other people, but also possible objects in nature and these give rise to two major kinds of self theory propositions.

"The first is the 'they-me' relationship, in which the person is the object of another's actions, expectations, or attitudes, such as 'He doesn't want me to do that,' 'She approves of what I have just done,' 'My brother always got along well with me.' The second is the 'I-them' type, where the object is some other person. Here we find statements or observations of this kind: 'I do not think they are fair,' 'I demand that he do that,' 'I will be angry if he fails to live up to his promise,' and so on.

Two other possible relationships come to mind. One of these is the 'they-them' type, where others are both the subject and the object. This is not constitutive of the self-theory system, since it involves interaction in which the person is neither subject nor object.

It is the other logical possibility, where the person himself is both the subject and the object, that captures the imagination. What of the general class of relationships of the 'I-me' type? Examples are: 'I am content with myself,' 'I expect that I will be able to do this,' 'I should not demand so much of myself.'" (4)

Sixth: any theory, formally defined, has properties other than just its content. What about the formal properties of a person's self theories? My mentioning just a few of these shows how familiar aspects of the "self" component of personality are now approachable on new terms.

Thus, we can examine self theories in terms of their validity; their internal consistency; their openness to change. And since man strives to foresee his future, the time orientation characterizing his self theory --- the extent to which the components of the self theory are conscious or not also has a parallel in scientific theory generally. Surely, viewing the self as a theory elevates our interest in what Brewster Smith calls the "human gift of self awareness," in contrast to Jung's "iceberg theory" of the self --- that the essential self lies outside awareness. Still, my view is straightforward, namely, that man holds a variety of beliefs and theories about himself, some of which he is conscious of, some of which he is not; some of which are deeply repressed, some not salient enough to come beyond the subconscious, and others being the object of complete awareness. All of these are components of the theory, but only part is in conscious awareness. It takes only a brief stretch of imagination to see that in scientific theory generally, digging out the hidden assumptions, the unrecognized axioms and premises, the implicit and unsurfaced key propositions, is an integral part of the growth and development of science, as it is for individual human beings.

II. Culture and Socialization

Self theory, like other knowledge, is dependent on the theories in one's culture about human nature and about the social, biological, and physical world. To put it succinctly, man is dependent for his theories about himself on what is available in his culture. His culture provides the answers. Only to the smallest degree does he generate new knowledge from his own actions. For instance, a man's theory of bodily functioning, of whether he is sick or well, and what to do about either state, are dependent on the theories of health and aging which exist in his culture. And our culture may do us wrong. At any given time the theories available to a person are likely to hold much that is false, just as early medicine, and medicine today, mislead many people about the relationship of their actions to their own health. And, perhaps more to our interest here, note the still widespread scientific theory that intellectual functions uniformly decline through the lifespan after physical maturity is reached, thus misguiding a person's theory about what she or he might be able to achieve in middle and later life.

The culture not only provides the interpretation of the individual event, provides the accumulated theory into which his own theory about himself must fit, it also does more. For one thing, the language available to one expands or limits the concepts available for his own thinking. Language is elaborated on aspects of experience which are most salient --- for whatever historical evolutionary reasons --- to that culture. Thus we know only distantly about the Eskimos' terms for seventeen different kinds of snow and what they should do about them; or the Tibetans' hundred and twenty terms for different states of being --- concepts not available to those of us raised in this segment of the western world.

Moreover, studies in the sociology of knowledge show how the unequal distribution of amount and quality of knowledge in society, to various privileged and less privileged social groups, must produce group differences in theories of man in relation to others and to the universe. You are privileged by evidence of being here; while 99 percent of man does not have the concept of, say, repression, in their self theory --- in their arsenal of thought.

And, of course, the culture tells each person not only what he should think about himself, but tells each of us what the other person's self theory should be! Thus men acquire a theory of what a woman's self theory should be, of what is the right view for her to hold --- as we clearly see in reports about male psychotherapists dealing with female patients. And so, if we have girls who think they are boys, their theories about who they are and what they can do are soon under corrective reform.

As the anthropologist Ralph Linton would have said: Each person will have some beliefs about himself that are unique; some that are similar to what others in his social groups believe about

themselves, and some beliefs that are shared with all members of the culture.

III. The Child's Developing Theory of Self

Developmental psychology is the great power base of human development research, but when with so much interest I turned to the child development research literature to read about the origins and early development of the little child's theories of himself in relation to the world I found, alas, virtually nothing. (The work of Michael Lewis and his associates is a notable exception.) In a recent unpublished paper, Mary Larson reports her classification of articles in three American journals: Developmental Psychology, Journal of Genetic Psychology, and the Child Development Abstracts for the three years, 1972-1974. Only 18 studies out of nearly 1,000 in these leading American journals were concerned with the child's developing self.

I note that there are special areas of study in socialization and personality development in children dealing with aspects of theories of how the world might work. I include June Tapp's work on how and what children learn about the legal system; some emerging work on socialization (e.g. Fred Greenstein and Kent Jennings in the U.S.); studies of moral development, which I reinterpret as successively sophisticated self theories in certain kinds of social situations; and, of course, Piaget, on developing theories of the physical world.

But, we have nothing comparable in research on development of the sociological and psychological components of the child's self theories. What are little children's developing theories of causal reality about the social world and their own emerging roles in it; their developing theories about how the social system works; the preschool and first-grade child's evolving, minute views of the school, of the classroom, of the peer group, as well as of what they can do about it. What, indeed, are these miniature theories of behavior and how do they develop and change over time.

I think that the failure of developmental psychologists to take this perspective on the child's emerging personality is part of a general failure to connect child development research to matters of greatest interest in adult personality. I believe this failure has several causes. First, most of child development study proceeds on the assumption that there is no change in personality after childhood, and that there is some "mythical plateau of adulthood" to which child development can predict. Secondly, the developing attributes of the child that have been most studied are, in the main, near completion by age twelve. Third, the consumers of child development information have been the schools and families; and prediction has been to tasks in these institutions, not to later life tasks. Fourth, we have been overly-influenced by the infantile determinists. Such determinism might be the case in extreme personal disorders, such as severe Oedipal problems, but not be

the case generally. We know there is ample evidence for adult personality change and, also that, the prediction from childhood to adulthood is very poor. In fact, the correlation between secondary school and college performance (both academic and non-academic) and later happiness and general adjustment in work, family, and community, is virtually zero.

In musing over this matter and the implication for child development, I see the challenge of: What indeed does child development research today have to offer to the study of adult personality? I think we no longer simply can assume its relevance.

One of the two roads that might be taken is to accept the fact that there is no connection. This opens up other lines of justification for studying children. One can study the child to predict well being and performance later on in the school and family systems. Secondly one can state that the child is of value in its own right, rather than as father of the man. The child is to be loved and supported for what he is, now, not for what he can become. The age of childhood must be viewed as a category of equal merit with other segments in the lifespan, not on the basis of promise. Do we ask the elderly what they promise us in the future?

The second road --- and my preference, since I do not want child development to be left behind as we move forward in our understanding of human behavior in the last quarter of this century --- is to say that it is people, not an age, that interests us, and that we want to study new kinds of characteristics which capture the essence of the social being of man and which show continuity from childhood to adulthood. I believe that components of the person's self theory are just such human characteristics deserving of study, in later life.

IV. Personality Change in Adulthood

There are hundreds of investigations which substantiate personality change in adulthood, in reactions to situations, in attitudes, in reference groups, in self-descriptive items, in sources of gratification, in dyadic relationships, in objective descriptions by friends, and on psychological tests. The data come from self reports, longitudinal studies, observational materials, individual protocols, personal descriptions attesting to the fact that "everybody is working on something." Change, not continuity, seems the natural state of the organism.

This work, however, says really very little about what kinds of personality change may occur, and adult personality theory is in bad shape on this score. Indeed, it is stretching the facts only a bit to say that "almost every hypothesis about what changes in adult personality has been both confirmed and disconfirmed by one or another study." But I am struck by the poor quality of most

of this research. While child development research is, with great scientific sophistication, missing many of the important questions; adult personality change research has the right questions but weak methods.

By this remark I do not mean to belittle the important and valuable work in some of the better known longitudinal studies such as the Berkeley Growth Study at the University of California. As most know, repeated measures from childhood to present adulthood have delineated the rise and fall of certain aspects of personality, and recently specific characteristics are being tracked through the years of the study. But the value of this work, as we also know, is limited by the characteristics of the subject populations, it is small in size, and unrepresentative of the larger society.

I have the impression that the life span development perspective is more widespread among non-United States scholars, and that having gotten started a bit later on longitudinal studies they have benefited from our mistakes by shifting to larger numbers of respondents, more representative in nature, and better techniques for maintaining contact through the life of the survey. In the United States now, there are many important new longitudinal studies (e.g. the work of Warner Schaie and associates) which either just are or soon will be coming on stream. This second generation of life span development studies in the United States avoid in substantial part the defects of the pioneer studies.

With reference to cross-sectional studies --- that is, national surveys of adults --- and their contributions, the problems of disentangling historical or "age-cohort" effects from chronological age effects are well known and for the most part insolvable, with the result that they give little insight into life span development. Moreover, a recent canvas of data available in the archives of the major survey center in the United States shows that there is little information at hand that we ordinarily think of as being in the domain of personality; in contrast, say, to data on "consumer preferences" or "voting behavior" in national elections.

V. Some Illustrations of Possible Systematic Changes in Theories of Oneself Through the Life Span

You see, by now, that I believe there is very little in the literature of the behavioral sciences which traces the life course, from cradle to grave, of specific components in one's theory of self. We do not have anything approximating the model essay by Paul Baltes on the life span development of measured intelligence.(5)

There are promising fragments along the life path --- for instance, in childhood theories about personal capability. We know from Berscheid and Walster's review of research on physical attractiveness that four-year olds have developed a theory of where they stand on a beauty-ugliness dimension, and that their ranking of themselves and their peers correlate significantly with

independent adult ratings of pictures. And, David A. Goslin has shown us that elementary school children have a good idea of where they fit in their school classroom on the characteristics of intelligence, and that their self-rankings as well as others in the classroom are accurate for the most part. But these are not tied to later parts of the life course; there is no real follow through here to the later years.

Thus the three examples I now submit to you are brief and sketchy --- necessarily so because we do not have the facts to fill them out in detail.

1. Theories of Personal Control

I will pass over this briefly because a recent paper of mine on this topic is known to many of the Americans here. But since it is a provocative illustration of what we should look for, and build on, I do want to mention it. Essentially it deals with what is referred to as "internal vs. external sense of control;" that is, whether one says that he or some other force is the determining factor in the outcome of some event. The items quoted earlier, e.g. "When I make plans, I am almost certain I can make them work" are from scales measuring this personal belief.

The relevant data are cross-sectional, not longitudinal, hence subject to doubt, but they are impressive.

We are lacking descriptions of infancy and early childhood --- of those first confrontations with reality in which the early vague sense of omnipotence begins to be checked, and the process by which this infantile sense of personal control is corrected by experience, and anthropomorphism is replaced by a valid, pragmatic, and growing belief in one's control over his life. But even so, while there is not much to go on, it does appear that during the life span segment from around age five or six to the mid-life period, changes in the sense of personal control correspond in a common sense way to the realities of life, namely, an increase from early childhood up through the adolescent expansion --- the feeling of great power, of "I cannot fail" --- through the next several decades of mastery of the key tasks of life --- and then the inversion point and the gradual erosion of the sense of control during the later years. Some good research (6;7) shows increases in the sense of personal control from first to tenth grade, and from fourth to tenth grade; one large national survey of attitudes demonstrates increases of a substantial nature in the sense of personal control from tenth to twelfth grades, and across all social class groups. Then, from age twenty on the data from the unpublished study by the Gurins shows a steady increase by decades to age fifty. But then, from age fifty on, there is a clear decrease in reported sense of personal control through age seventy and over. And in support is David Gutmann's cross-cultural work showing that adult males from about fifty-five on stop seeing the world as something

that can be conquered, and begin to regard their problems as beyond their own or any other human's control. (8)

The research materials on socioeconomic status and race differences in the sense of powerlessness and fatalism is one of the most stable, substantial findings of United States sociology of the past fifteen years. The facts are that lower class, Catholic, and black members of society on the average are lower in the sense of personal control, and that each of these sub-group characteristics makes an independent contribution to the difference. In part this reflects the realities of life --- we say that one's personal theory is in accord with the facts of his or her life --- but of course also in part shows the culturally determined content in self-theories. "Que sera, sera."

2. Theories of Future Career Achievements

For men especially, work outside the home takes the largest single percentage of one's waking hours and powerfully influences the development and change in many aspects of self-esteem in life --- to be valued by others who matter, to feel in control of one's life course, to believe that one is distinctive, unique even, that one counts for something special in the common pilgrimage of man; to sense personal growth and development so that one is something more than as of a week ago --- the pursuit of these and other elements in the summary sense of self-esteem pervades the work of most men. Not surprisingly much of one's theory about the self in relation to the world bears on one's occupational life.

It is true, now, that studies of occupational choice, related to personal and social characteristics, exist in large number. Indeed, studies of occupational choice have been made of quite young children, where the responses of almost all of them make it clear that any realism in the choice, that is, the infusion of any sense of what an occupation might mean, is clearly absent. Unrealistic high career aspirations also spring from the emphasis in American culture on achievement or upward social mobility among certain youth who are old enough to know something about careers, but come from deprived cultural backgrounds where their lives are cut off from realistic information.

Recognize also that in the past two decades, vocational guidance and occupational counseling during the adolescent age period has had the effect of bringing career choices more in line with scientific appraisals of one's capacities, as shown in the work of John Flannigan at American Institutes of Research and of David Armour of Rand in his study of school guidance counseling.

Most of this work is on occupational choice. There is, in contrast, no work approaching it in quality and scope on level of aspiration within a given career, once it has been chosen or one has drifted into it. Nevertheless, it seems highly likely that the characteristics of occupational choice, in so far as aspiration

is concerned and its unrealistic or fantasy elements are involved, would have a direct parallel in the aspirations one sets for oneself within a career; or, as I would say, one's theories of future possible achievements. Thus progression from early age on into the career might well be characterized by an increase in realism about what is possible for one, and a steady lowering of aspirations to correspond to the gradual foreclosing of reality.

Research now in progress (9) will plot career trajectories or career curves relating achievement in an occupation to chronological age or length of time in the occupation. The criteria of achievement may be income, age of greatest productivity, age of best work, or the amount of prestige, or power, accorded a person. There may be sets of curves for the different criteria for a given occupation, and also comparisons of curves across occupations for a given criteria such as income. Currently, though, we do not know if the variance within each of these is too great to make it possible to generalize.

But we can speculate that there is the gradual, and sometimes rather abrupt, reconciliation of the gap between career aspirations and likely achievement during the mid-life period. This is well represented in fiction and also in theories on the stresses of the mid-life period from William James, Buhler, Kuhlen, Butler, Slotkin, and others. The fact seems to be that the mid-life male eventually must alter his views of himself and what he can achieve in his career, that the day of reckoning finally arrives as time begins to run out and the career trajectory has flattened out, that one is as high as he will ever go, and that his self theory changes in accord with this experience.

Social class differences must exist by virtue of relationship to types of occupations with different career trajectories, but these remain unexplored. We can see that the blue-collar worker in industry tends to top out earlier, say in the mid-thirties, and the white collar corporate executive somewhat later, say by forty-five or so. This brings their theories about their own achievement possibilities under stress, under need for revision, at different ages, possibly tying in with the sociological datum that blue collar workers start frequenting the taverns in their mid- and late thirties, and the executives start the three-martini luncheon in their forties.

3. Theories About Change in Oneself

Every person must have as a component of the self theory some hypotheses about the kind of person he can become in future time, and hence must have a theory of the possibility of personal change. He would draw heavily on his culture --- which has its own theories of human nature, in the form of science, myth, and legend and religious belief, and specifically has a theory about the possibility of changing human nature --- I would even say this is a cultural universal, in the same sense that theories about life after death or the origin of life must exist in every culture.

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One might have lived in Greece in the centuries B.C. when mythology and legend said that all things are mutable, that anything can become something else, and probably is in the process of doing so; or, in sharp contrast, live in a Calvinist world in which predestination for heaven or hell could not be altered by one's acts, whatever they might be. And Calvinism stands as the bridge from the Judaic tradition to the modern Protestant sects which believe in the possibility of human improvement, viz: "I wish I could live longer because then I could be perfect by the time I die."

Our knowledge about whether American people think they can change, or not, is sparse. I present some illustrative data relating to intelligence, from two national surveys of American high-school students' attitudes and beliefs about intelligence. One set of survey questions concerned beliefs about the stability of one's intelligence over time. More than four-fifths of this adolescent population believed that intelligence continues to increase throughout life. A related question: "given the best conditions of diet, education, intellectual stimulation, etc., it is possible for an average person to raise his intelligence test score at most by ---" showed that some two-fifths say about 10 percent, an additional one quarter go as high as 20 percent and still another one quarter believe a 25-50 percent increase as possible. A third question was whether they think their own scores on intelligence tests have stayed the same, or changed. About one half say they have remained the same; and the other one half say scores have risen during the past two or three years. A fourth question, about the future, shows some 70 percent of the respondents saying that they will be higher or much higher in intelligence in ten years. All in all, we get a portrait of this age group's belief in the fluidity and upgrading of intelligence in years to come.

However, there are significant social group differences in these theories: those adolescents who see intelligence as continuing to increase throughout life are more often from lower class backgrounds, more often females, more often white than black, and more often Protestant and Catholic than Jewish. I ask you now: What kind of experience up to this age of sixteen or so, what kind of cultural background, what kind of cultural rhetoric or proverbs produce these differences in theories about the changeability of intelligence over life?

In child development the work that is particularly relevant --- on object fixation --- includes studies of children from five to seven showing at this age boys still believe that they can be mothers when they grow up, and children believe that they can be black or white when they get older. Later the realization comes that one cannot change color or change sex, and it is reminiscent of those many children who fall from second story windows while trying to fly after reading --- or seeing --- Peter Pan. The child starts down the path of a life time of "ontogenetic disappointments," as my colleague Carol Ryff has put it, and one's theories about the changes

that are open to the self swing from optimism to pessimism.

But, in opposition, there is also great satisfaction from the sense of continuity, allaying fear that one is being altered or coming to pieces. Consider the following from Epstein. (3,p.405)

> "This is well illustrated in the following description by Lauretta Bender (1950) of the reactions of a schizophrenic girl on meeting her psychiatrist: Ruth, a five year old, approached the psychiatrist with 'Are you the bogey man? Are you going to fight my mother? Are you the same mother? Are you the same father? Are you going to be another mother?' and finally screaming in terror, 'I am afraid I am going to be someone else.'"

The "ontogenetic disappointments" probably lead to the development of legends and myths about human mutability; but also, one of their functions is to calm the fears of personal disintegration which otherwise might destroy one. With a colleague, Charlotte Darrow, I am compiling a collection and interpretation of these great legends of human metamorphosis, primarily in western culture. This includes the classics --- Faust; Jekyll and Hyde; Samson Agonistes; Paul, on the road to Damascus --- as well as many modern selections from such as Thurber, Kaffka and Philip Roth. We examine these first in terms of causal agent, e.g. biochemical, magical, possession by spirits or gods; and secondly by the content of the legendary change, for instance, in body, in mind, in personality. We then consider in turn, such matters as whether the change is voluntary or not, its abruptness or radicalness, and most significantly, whether it is permanent or reversible. Manifest throughout is man's hunger to foresee and to transform his personal future, while at the same time he exhibits his terror of forces beyond him. The treasured stories and legends about metamorphosis in children --- for example, Pinnochio --- are especially poignant because they engage children's fascination with possible transformation of self, and realization of the life history constraints they face in the continuity of who they are now.

VI. Setting the Research Agenda

What I would like to see is a development of a research agenda to get us farther down the road on creating this part of human development theory, which deals with the life course, with the continuity and change in components of one's theories about oneself --- and how this varies among cultural groups.

Think of a grid which intersects age and topic; which includes components of self theories moving through the experiences of the life span. The grid should include as topics both content of the self theory, however classified --- or better, employing multiple classifications simultaneously --- and also include the meta-characteristics of the theory of self. We could examine the

life-course trajectory of any one of these components, these modules of self theory; and we could look across the grid at any age for the developmental profile of the child, or adolescent, or mid-life male or females' theory about him or her self.

To illustrate, we might look across the developmental profile during the period age forty to fifty for United States' males and thus gain some perspective on the "male mid-life crisis." We know a number of self-theory changes are required in this decade --- "developmental tasks," we could say --- in regard to declining personal control, to shifting beliefs about one's body capacities, to changing hypotheses about one's future achievements --- changes which if demanded too rapidly, or simultaneously, yield a crisis in one's theory about who he is. (10)

But this is dreaming at the present time, for the open question is whether or not these life span development charts of aspects of self theory would show any pattern over time, would really have enough similarity across individuals to be able to generalize about life history. Perhaps even after getting the most significant and sophisticated concepts describing man's self theories, the experiences through the life span still consist primarily of idiosyncratic ups and downs so that while change clearly occurs, it is forever unpredictable. We shall find out as we move forward in our life span developmental theory of people's theories of themselves.

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